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EXAMINER

PARTON, KEVIN S

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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2153

DATE MAILED: 04/07/2004

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

09/514,945

Applicant(s)

NISHIHARA ET AL.

Examiner

Kevin Parton

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If the period for reply specified above is less than thirty (30) days, a reply within the statutory minimum of thirty (30) days will be considered timely.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 26 January 2004.
- 2a) ☐ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☒ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-10 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☒ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
- ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 - ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 - ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152)
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

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DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1-10 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Specification

2. Claim 1 is objected to because of the following informalities: the term "indentifier" in line 5 is misspelled. The correct term is "identifier". Appropriate correction is required.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

3. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

4. Claims 1 and 4-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) in view of Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640).

5. Regarding claim 1, Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) teach a network system which transfers a work item generated or processed at each of the client terminals to the next user in charge in accordance with a prespecified process flow, comprising:

- a. A process management table defining the relation between an identifier of each of nodes constructing a business process and a destination of a work item in correspondence with a business identifier (figure 15; column 14, lines 10-18).

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- b. A user management table linked to management information of each of the users of the client terminals, for indicating a list of work items transferred to the user and information regarding multiple users in association with each node operation (figures 11A, 11B, element 1140).
- c. A controller for allowing, according to the user management table, with respect to at least one work item, both a first user user to whom the work item is transferred and a second user to access the work item, and directly or indirectly transferring the work item processed by either user to the next user according to the process management table (figure 16h; column 11, lines 34-38; column 13, line 18; column 15, lines 24-32). Please note that in the reference, any member of a workgroup may access an item as a user in charge.

Although the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) shows substantial features of the claimed invention, it fails to disclose means wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user.

Nonetheless, these features are well known in the art and it would have been an obvious modification of the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271), as evidenced by Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640).

In an analogous art, Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640) discloses a workflow management system wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user (column 6, lines 9-10; column 13, lines 10-15).

Given the teaching of Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640), a person having ordinary skill in the art would have readily recognized the desirability and advantages of modifying Caruso et al. (USPN

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5,848,271) by employing the use of a specific user in charge and a substitute user for each work item. This benefits the system by allowing each work item entering the workgroup of Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) to be picked up by a specific user rather than just as a pool waiting to be accessed.

6. Regarding claim 4, Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) teach all the limitations as applied to claim 1. They further teach means wherein:

- a. The user management table includes identification information of a user designated for each process by the user in association with identification information of each of the users of the client terminals (figure 16h, 11A, 11B; column 11, lines 34-38; column 13, line 18; column 15, lines 24-32).
- b. Wherein when a request of starting the work process with respect to a work item received by another user is sent from a user other than the destination user of the work item, the controller refers to the information stored in the user management table corresponding to the another user, checks the qualifications of the request source user for an identification of the another user, and specifies a work item which can be permitted to the user (figure 11A, 11B; column 15, lines 24-32). Please note that any user of a workgroup will be able to access an item.

Although the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) shows substantial features of the claimed invention, it fails to disclose means wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user.

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Nonetheless, these features are well known in the art and it would have been an obvious modification of the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271), as evidenced by Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640).

In an analogous art, Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640) discloses a workflow management system wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user (column 6, lines 9-10; column 13, lines 10-15).

Given the teaching of Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640), a person having ordinary skill in the art would have readily recognized the desirability and advantages of modifying Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) by employing the use of a specific user in charge and a substitute user for each work item. This benefits the system by allowing each work item entering the workgroup of Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) to be picked up by a specific user rather than just as a pool waiting to be accessed.

7. Regarding claim 5, Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) teach Teach all the limitations as applied to claim 1. The further teach:

- a. The user management table includes identification information of designated users for each process in association with identification information of each of users of the client terminals (figure 16h, 11A, 11B; column 11, lines 34-38; column 13, line 18; column 15, lines 24-32).
- b. Means for creating, when a request of starting the substitution process with respect to work items to be processed by another user is received from a user other than the user in the destination of the work item, a dialog box for selecting a user on the client terminal as a request source on the basis of

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identification information of the user stored in the user management table corresponding to the request source user, and means for specifying, when a user is designated by the request source user, work items which can be processed by the request source user instead of the user in charge by referring to information stored in the user management table corresponding to the designated user in charge after checking the qualifications of the request source user for working as a user (figure 16h, 1A, 11B; column 11, lines 34-38; column 13, line 18; column 15, lines 24-32). Please note that any user that accesses an item will be verified as a member of the appropriate workgroup.

Although the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) shows substantial features of the claimed invention, it fails to disclose means wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user.

Nonetheless, these features are well known in the art and it would have been an obvious modification of the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271), as evidenced by Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640).

In an analogous art, Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640) discloses a workflow management system wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user (column 6, lines 9-10; column 13, lines 10-15).

Given the teaching of Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640), a person having ordinary skill in the art would have readily recognized the desirability and advantages of modifying Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) by employing the use of a specific user in charge and a substitute user for each work item. This benefits the system by allowing each work item entering the workgroup of Caruso et

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al. (USPN 5,848,271) to be picked up by a specific user rather than just as a pool waiting to be accessed.

8. Regarding claim 6, Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) teach all the limitations as applied to claim 4. They further teach means wherein:

- a. The user management table stores at least one of power of substitute, substitution conditions, and substitution effective term besides identification information of the substitute user designated by each user for each process (figure 16h; column 11, lines 34-38; column 13, line 18; column 15, lines 24-32). Note that in the reference, security information is saved for a substitute user.
- b. The controller checks whether the identification information of the request source user has been registered in advance or not and at least one of the power of substitute, substitution conditions, and substitution effective term at the time of checking qualifications of the request source user (column 15, lines 24-32).

9. Regarding claim 7, Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) teach all the limitations as applied to claim 1. The further teach:

- a. The user management table includes, in correspondence with the identification information of each of the users of the client terminals, identifiers of an unprocessed work item, an identifier of substitute users, and an identifier of a user in charge (column 15, lines 24-32). Note that all of this would be included in the check for user authorization.

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- b. A work item management table for storing, in correspondence with a work item identifier, an identifier of a business process to which the work item belongs and an identifier of a node indicating the present position of the work item (figure 16h; column 11, lines 34-38; column 13, line 18; column 15, lines 24-32). Note that the next user or workgroup is determined and the appropriate information is attached to the task.
- c. The controller allows both the user in charge who has not yet processed a work item in the user management table and a substitute user to process the work item, specifies a next node identifier and a destination user from the process management table in accordance with the business process identifier of the work item and the identifier of the node in the present position with respect to the work item processed by each of the client terminals, registers the work item as an unprocessed work item in another user management table corresponding to the destination user, and updates the identifier of the node indicative of the present position to the identifier of the next node in the work item management table corresponding to the work item (figure 16h; column 11, lines 34-38; column 13, line 18; column 15, lines 24-32).

Although the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) shows substantial features of the claimed invention, it fails to disclose means wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user.

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Nonetheless, these features are well known in the art and it would have been an obvious modification of the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271), as evidenced by Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640).

In an analogous art, Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640) discloses a workflow management system wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user (column 6, lines 9-10; column 13, lines 10-15).

Given the teaching of Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640), a person having ordinary skill in the art would have readily recognized the desirability and advantages of modifying Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) by employing the use of a specific user in charge and a substitute user for each work item. This benefits the system by allowing each work item entering the workgroup of Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) to be picked up by a specific user rather than just as a pool waiting to be accessed.

10. Regarding claim 9, Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) teach a system which transfers a work item generated or processed at each of the client terminals to a next user in charge in accordance with a prespecified process flow with means for:

- a. Requesting from one of said client terminals to said workflow server to display a work item to be performed by a user (figure 16h; column 11, lines 34-38; column 13, line 18; column 15, lines 24-32). Note that any user of the group can start the task.
- b. Selecting by the workflow server an unprocessed work item which can be processed by a user of a request source client terminal as the substitute user among unprocessed work items of the user in charge (column 15, lines 24-32)

- c. Displaying the selected work item on a display screen of the request source client terminal (figure 16h).

Although the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) shows substantial features of the claimed invention, it fails to disclose means wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user.

Nonetheless, these features are well known in the art and it would have been an obvious modification of the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271), as evidenced by Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640).

In an analogous art, Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640) discloses a workflow management system wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user (column 6, lines 9-10; column 13, lines 10-15).

Given the teaching of Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640), a person having ordinary skill in the art would have readily recognized the desirability and advantages of modifying Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) by employing the use of a specific user in charge and a substitute user for each work item. This benefits the system by allowing each work item entering the workgroup of Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) to be picked up by a specific user rather than just as a pool waiting to be accessed.

11. Regarding claim 10, Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) teach a system which transfers a work item generated or processed at each of the client terminals to a next user in charge in accordance with a prespecified process flow with means for:

- a. Specifying by the workflow server, when a request of display of a user in charge is issued from any one of the client terminals, at least one of users in

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charge on the basis of management information prepared for each of users of the client terminals to display the user in charge on the request source client terminal (figure 16h; column 11, lines 34-38; column 13, line 18; column 15, lines 24-32). Note that any member of a group may access a task.

- b. Selecting by said workflow server, when the client terminal requests to display a work item to be performed by a user, at least one of unprocessed work items which can be processed by the client terminal user among unprocessed work items of the user to display the selected unprocessed work item on the client terminal (figure 16h; column 11, lines 34-38; column 13, line 18; column 15, lines 24-32).

Although the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) shows substantial features of the claimed invention, it fails to disclose means wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user.

Nonetheless, these features are well known in the art and it would have been an obvious modification of the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271), as evidenced by Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640).

In an analogous art, Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640) discloses a workflow management system wherein a first user is a user in charge and a second user is specifically a predesignated substitute user (column 6, lines 9-10; column 13, lines 10-15).

Given the teaching of Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640), a person having ordinary skill in the art would have readily recognized the desirability and advantages of modifying Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) by employing the use of a specific user in charge and a substitute user for each work

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item. This benefits the system by allowing each work item entering the workgroup of Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) to be picked up by a specific user rather than just as a pool waiting to be accessed.

12. Regarding claim 8, although the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) (as applied to claim 1) shows substantial features of the claimed invention, it fails to disclose means for transmitting a message for reminding the process of the work item to be urgently processed to at least one of the client terminal operated by the user in charge as a destination of the work item and a client terminal operated by the substitute user designated as a substitute of the work item.

Nonetheless, these features are well known in the art and it would have been an obvious modification of the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271).

A person having ordinary skill in the art would have readily recognized the desirability and advantages of modifying Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) by employing the use of an identifier to point out urgent tasks. This benefits the system by allowing substitute users to actively seek out and complete the most urgent tasks first.

13. Claims 2 and 3 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) in view of Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640) as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of Thompson et al. (USPN 6,334,133).

14. Regarding claim 2, although the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) and Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640) (as applied to claim 1) shows substantial features of the claimed invention, it fails to disclose means for displaying, in response to a request from any requesting client terminal, a list of users who are designated the user of the requesting client terminal as a

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substitute on the client terminal, wherein the substitute user specifies the user in charge by referring to the list of users.

Nonetheless, these features are well known in the art and it would have been an obvious modification of the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) and Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640), as evidenced by Thompson et al. (USPN 6,334,133).

In an analogous art, Thompson et al. (USPN 6,334,133) discloses a system for using substitute workers in the fulfillment of a workflow task with means for displaying, in response to a request from any requesting client terminal, a list of users who are designated the user of the requesting client terminal as a substitute on the client terminal, wherein the substitute user specifies the user in charge by referring to the list of users (figure 12).

Given the teaching of Thompson et al. (USPN 6,334,133), a person having ordinary skill in the art would have readily recognized the desirability and advantages of modifying Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) and Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640) by employing the display of substitute users upon request from a client terminal. This benefits the system by allowing users to know what other people may be available to take a task or that have already completed a task.

15. Regarding claim 3, although the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) and Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640) (as applied to claim 1) shows substantial features of the claimed invention, it fails to disclose means wherein when any user of the client terminals specifies a user serving as the user in charge and requests display of a work item to be performed by the user of the client terminal as a substitute user, the controller checks qualifications of the user of the request source client terminal for a substitute user by referring to the management table

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corresponding to the user in charge and specifies work items to be displayed for the substitute user.

Nonetheless, these features are well known in the art and it would have been an obvious modification of the system disclosed by Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) and Tarumi (USPN 6,115,640), as evidenced by Thompson et al. (USPN 6,334,133).

In an analogous art, Thompson et al. (USPN 6,334,133) discloses a system for using substitute workers in the fulfillment of a workflow task comprising means wherein when any user of the client terminals specifies a user serving as the user in charge and requests display of a work item to be performed by the user of the client terminal as a substitute user, the controller checks qualifications of the user of the request source client terminal for a substitute user by referring to the management table corresponding to the user in charge and specifies work items to be displayed for the substitute user (abstract; figure 3; column 4, lines 43-45). Note that appropriate substitutes are searched by skills and the tasks are displayed.

Given the teaching of Thompson, a person having ordinary skill in the art would have readily recognized the desirability and advantages of modifying Caruso et al. (USPN 5,848,271) by employing the use of a database to store and retrieve substitutes for work fulfillment. This allows the system to rapidly add and remove personnel and to generate reports on the available substitutes.

Conclusion

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Kevin Parton whose telephone number is (703)306-0543. The examiner can normally be reached on M-F 8:00AM - 4:30PM.


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If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Glenton Burgess can be reached on (703)305-4792. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

Kevin Parton
Examiner
Art Unit 2153

ksp



GLENTON B. BURGESS
SUPERVISORY PATENT EXAMINER
TECHNOLOGY CENTER 2100

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